



6.1 Conclusions

Community involvement is an integral part of the project development process. Once themes have been identified, local and State officials can prioritize, program, and develop proposed projects.

As a result of stakeholder input and technical improvement needs along the corridor several conclusions have been identified. There is extremely high interest in what happens along the Route 99 Corridor. These interests are centered around the role Route 99 plays in the following areas:

- enhancing overall driver experience
- safe and efficient highway
- fair share of transportation funding
- community identity
- corridor identity
- economic vitality

6.1.1 Enhancing Overall Driver Experience

There is a strong perception that the driving experience along the Route 99 corridor is not one that portrays an invitation to either stop to visit cities and communities or attract business interests to locate in the San Joaquin Valley. Modernizing the freeway, shielding unsightly views and enhanced litter clean-up are some of the actions that can help address this issue.

Showcasing tourist attractions, historical and cultural resources also provide an opportunity to both enhance traveler experience and boost tourism to the San Joaquin Valley. Information can be provided to travelers through information kiosks at Safety Roadside Rest areas, special radio channel, internet web sites, and Route 99 corridor coupon brochures.

6.1.2 Safe And Efficient Highway

Virtually everyone wants and expects a safe and efficient driving experience. Caltrans' top priority is addressing safety needs. Improvements addressing current safety and congestion needs have been programmed. There is over \$ 1.3 billion of safety, rehabilitation, operations and safety, and aesthetic improvements currently in the "project delivery pipeline". While not all of the funds are formally committed to these projects, by having the preliminary engineering and environmental studies or project design phase programmed, Caltrans is authorized to work on these projects so the construction funds can be committed to them when needed. As additional safety and congestion relief needs are identified they will be added to the currently programmed projects.

CONCLUSION

6.1.3 Fair Share Of Transportation Funding

There is very strong perception that the San Joaquin Valley has historically not received transportation funding comparable to that generated by fuel taxes in the Valley. There has been no definitive information generated which supports or dispels this allegation. Current State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) fund allocation formulas do not consider fuel tax generated within each county as criteria to distribute transportation funding. Instead, the STIP formula is based upon 75% population and 25% State Highway center line miles. In addition the pot of funds are separated by population with 40% going to the 45 counties in the “north counties group” and 60% going the 13 counties of the “south counties group”. The San Joaquin Valley has a mix of “north” and “south” counties.

When all of the currently programmed Route 99 projects are fully funded and constructed more than \$1.2 billion will have been spent on the corridor. This will be more than has been dedicated to Route 99 over the past two decades. This represents a significant improvement but does not mean this will satisfy corridor needs. As mentioned earlier to meet the 20 year Transportation Corridor Concept Facility would require 3 or 4 times this amount.

6.1.4 Community Identity And Aesthetic Accoutrements

The single constant at every public meeting up and down the San Joaquin Valley was the desire that Route 99 look nice and be able to convey their community identity to travelers. Interestingly, not all communities have established a specific community identity. Therefore, that would be the first action item communities need to accomplish so they can take advantage of opportunities when they present themselves.

On the other hand clearing trash, weed control in landscape areas, graffiti removal, and shielding unsightly views are a matter of commitment by Caltrans, local communities, and volunteer groups.

6.1.5 Corridor Identity

Surveys of participants at both the Highway 99 Task Force and the five public outreach meetings held throughout the Valley identified that the San Joaquin Valley does not have an identity. In fact the north Valley tends to identify itself with the San Francisco Bay Area while the south Valley tends to identify itself with the Los Angeles area. The Valley needs its own identity.

Establishing a Route 99 Corridor identity can go a long way toward establishing a Valley identity. A proposed corridor theme

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was developed by a special committee of San Joaquin Valley representatives. The resulting proposed Route 99 corridor theme statement is “Route 99 The Mainstreet of California’s Heartland-Linking Heritage To Innovation.

6.1.6 Economic Vitality

Effective transportation facilities represent a lifeline to economic vitality. Route 99 is the vital link in that lifeline transportation system acting as the spine connecting the population and economic centers of the Valley with the east-west highways.

Fresno based Regional Jobs Initiative (RJI) representatives have initiated an effort to designate State Route 99 as part of the federal Interstate system. They have maintained that it is essential that Route 99 be designated an Interstate route if the Valley is to be successful in attracting businesses to locate in the San Joaquin Valley or for existing business to invest in expansion.

Several issues have surfaced regarding Interstate designation. Interstate routes have numerous higher standards. Will some or all Interstate standards be waived by the U.S. Department of Transportation? What is the benefit versus the cost? The cost to meet standards, in current dollars, has been roughly estimated at between \$6 and \$8 billion. How much of this funding would be needed anyway to meet the Caltrans Transportation Corridor Concept Facility? Where will this funding come from?

Discussions of these issues, led by the Great Valley Center, are currently underway between the RJI, the eight Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Caltrans and various elected representatives. Information and data is being developed by Caltrans to help these stakeholders come to a consensus on this issue.

These discussions continue to take place at this time. It is expected that conclusions can be included in the final Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan by the March, 2005 production date.

6.2 Next Actions

6.2.1 Local Agency Acceptance

Consistent with Goal 1, Objective 1A, the next step will be to seek resolutions of acceptance of the Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan from cities and counties located on the highway. Metropolitan Planning Organizations will also be asked to support the Master Plan. The intent is to seek support for the Master Plan as a guide and not as a mandate. It is hoped to accomplish this activity during the first half of 2005



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6.2.2 Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan Advisory Team

The Route 99 Corridor Master Plan Advisory Team will consist of a cross-section of groups/individuals that represent various government, private and industry sectors. Composition of the Advisory Team could consist of (suggestion only):

- Three (3) public members, one each representing the south, central and north regions.
- Three (3) Caltrans functional experts
- An MPO representative
- A member representing the three (3) counties in District 10
- A member representing the four (4) counties in District 6
- A member representing the cities in District 10
- A member representing the cities in District 6
- A member representing the Beautification Committees
- A member representing the Chambers of Commerce
- A member representing Economic Development Commissions
- A member representing the tourism industry
- A member representing the trucking industry

TOTAL: 16 members

The advisory team will review projects for compliance with the Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan and Caltrans' current standards and practices. The team will consider whether the proposed improvements:

- Ensure safety of the highway users.
- Ensure compatibility with the primary uses of the State high way system.
- Protect, maintain, and enhance the quality of the State high way system
- Ensure that the Corridor Theme - "Route 99-The Mainstreet of California's Heartland-Linking Heritage to Innovation," is consistently yet uniquely applied throughout the Route 99 corridor.

The Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan Advisory Team should review proposed improvements during project initiation and prior to project approval. Review guidelines will be established by the Advisory Team to advise on the proposed improvements.



C O N C L U S I O N

6.3 Update of the Route 99 Corridor Enhancement Master Plan

The Enhancement Master Plan Project Development Team, in conjunction with the Advisory Team, will update the Enhancement Master Plan on a periodic basis.

Since the Master Plan is available in a loose-leaf format, only those applicable changes and pertinent updated pages will be sent to the holders of the original document.

